

## **GARAMENDI AND CALIFORNIA'S LARGEST DOCTORS' UNION PUSH PUBLIC OPTION IN NATIONAL HEALTH CARE REFORM**

SAN FRANCISCO – Lieutenant Governor John Garamendi, a longtime advocate of health care for all and author of the groundbreaking report [“Priced Out: Health Care in California,”](#) today joined members of California's largest physicians' union to support a public option as part of national health care reform.

“A robust public option is important because it provides a solid health insurance benefit package to compete with the insurance companies whose sole motivation is to increase their profits,” Lieutenant Governor John Garamendi said. “You ask, how do I know this? For eight years as California's insurance commissioner, I saw how Wall Street judges the success of a health insurance company – based on how little it pays for medical services. This is called the ‘medical loss ratio.’ The lower the percentage of the premium dollar paid for medical services, the higher the stock price. Californians and all working families across this nation deserve an option where profit is not the motive – the public option.”

Today Garamendi stood with the Union of American Physicians and Dentists (UAPD) as they released a survey showing 80 percent of doctors consider some form of public health insurance to be the best plan for health care in the United States.

“What these findings tell us is that our doctors overwhelmingly support a robust public option as part of national health care reform. Our experience with patients in the field has shown us that a strong public option is absolutely essential for containing medical costs and keeping the private insurance industry honest,” Dr. Stuart Bussey, UAPD president said.

A recent New York Times poll shows 65 percent of Americans support a public option in national health care reform.

Garamendi warns if government is going to require people to buy an insurance policy, they have to guarantee it is affordable and protect consumers from soaring premiums.

“We are about to force at least 30 million people into an insurance market where the sharks are circling. Without effective protections, they will be eaten alive,” Garamendi said. In releasing the survey results, UAPD is calling on Congress to stand up to insurance industry opposition and include a robust public option in the healthcare reform plan.

There are over 6 million uninsured or underinsured in California. Without health insurance, emergency rooms often become the primary source for access to care. With the recession and rising unemployment, California’s community clinics and health centers have reported on average a 50% increase in newly uninsured patients this year.